Roosevelt Base, Auditorium/Gymnasium
(Building No. 23)
West Virginia Street between Richardson Avenue
and Reeves Avenue
Long Beach
Los Angeles
California

HABS No. CA-2663-D

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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Western Region
Department of the Interior
San Francisco, California 94107

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

ROOSEVELT BASE, AUDITORIUM/GYMNASIUM (Building No. 23)

HABS No. CA-2663 -D

Location: West Virginia Street between Richardson Avenue and Reeves Avenue, Naval Station Long Beach,
Long Beach, Los Angeles County, California

USGS Long Beach Quadrangle (7.5'), Universal Transverse Mercator

Coordinates: 11.384770.3735140

Present Owner: U.S. Navy, Southwest Division, San Diego

Original Use: Auditorium/Gymnasium

Present Use: Gym and Fitness Center

Significance: The Roosevelt Base Historic District, constructed in 1940-1943, consists of 11 buildings designed in the International Style with Mediterranean Revival detailing, five structures, and extensive historic landscaping. It is eligible for the National Register for its site planning, landscaping, architectural style, and its Associate Architect Paul Williams, a nationally prominent Los Angeles Afro-American architect. Additionally, the District is significant for its association with the buildup of permanent Naval facilities on the Pacific Coast under President Franklin D. Roosevelt, during the mobilization period preceding the United States' entry into World War II.

PART I: HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History

1. **Date of erection:** Building 23 was completed in 1942 (Nav. S. and A. Form 277) as part of Contract NOy 4279.

2. **Architect:** The architects were Adrian Wilson, chief architect, and Paul R. Williams, associate architect, of the "Allied Engineers Inc., Architects and Engineers", a Los Angeles firm, whose project design team also included Donald R. Warren, chief engineer; S.B. Barnes, structural engineer, and E.L. Ellingwood, mechanical engineer.

3. **Original and subsequent owners:** The U.S. Navy bought a strip of 105 acres along Seaside Boulevard for $1.00 from the City of Long Beach in 1940. The adjacent harbor was dredged and additional 177 acres were added to the original. Roosevelt Base, including Building #23, was constructed on this fill. In 1994 the Station was closed, and ownership resides with the U.S. Navy Southwest Division, in San Diego.

4. **Builder-contractor:** The contractors were Guy F. Atkinson of San Francisco and George Pollock of Sacramento, who joined forces and opened a local office for this large contract.

5. **Original plans and construction:** Built in 1942 for $321,252, this building, measuring 190' 2" x 126', served as an auditorium/gymnasium. The original plans are on file in Building 300, Long Beach Naval Shipyard.

6. **Alterations and additions:** Exterior alterations include: the replacement of all exterior doors with modern aluminum and glass double doors; the addition of mylar reflective surfaces to the east window wall; and the painting of supergraphics on the north, south, and east walls. Interior alterations include: the removal of the original hanging curtains surrounding the fabric screen on the south wall where movies were shown, and the painting of a supergraphic mural on this screen; the removal of the projection room equipment; the replacement of the gym's floor and lights after 1984; and the division of the entrance foyer into a central aerobics room, a women's fitness room in the south section and storage in the north section.

B. Historical Context:

The construction of the auditorium/gymnasium, Building 23, was part of a plan to provide recreational and administrative facilities for the Pacific Fleet, anchored in San Pedro harbor. The construction of the recreation complex was part of a nationwide military effort to replace deteriorating World War I temporary buildings with new permanent facilities to attract and retain post-war peacetime forces. Rather than using a standard design from the Bureau of Yards and Docks, the Navy — through Allied Engineers — hired local

civilian architects Adrian Wilson and Paul R. Willams. As a result the buildings, designed in the International Style with Mediterranean Revival details, are unique to the Base.

Construction of this complex, named Roosevelt Base, took place between 1940 and 1943, and cost $18 million, funded by congressional appropriations. Included were the gymnasium (23), squash/handball courts and locker rooms (22), a swimming pool (233) and tennis courts (221), arcade (234), lounge and bowling alley (20), officers' club (24), and fleet landing building (10), administration building (1), dispensary (2), fire station (3), central heating plant (4), labor board building (41), gatehouse (40), and main gates (gate 1), and a net pier (pier 7, structure 126).

Although designed in 1940 as recreation facilities for the Pacific Fleet, the complex was not used initially for this purpose. In response to Japan's increasing belligerence toward China, President Roosevelt, (for whom the Base was named) ordered the fleet from San Pedro Bay to Pearl Harbor, Oahu, Hawaii to serve as a deterrence and warning. After the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor, the Base was rushed to completion; new temporary barracks were constructed, and the facility was used as support for a Small Craft Training Center.

Building 23, the gymnasium, as well as the Field House and athletic fields to the north, were designated as Stark Field in 1941 in honor of Admiral H.R. Stark, USN, Chief of Naval Operations, who had been one of the officers responsible for obtaining approval and appropriations for the Fleet Operating Base on Terminal Island. When wartime necessitated the use of the athletic fields for a training drill field, the complex then became known as Stark Center (Rouse 1954: 180-181). The facilities, as well as the lounge and bowling alley, were used by the enlisted men assigned both to Roosevelt Base and the Small Craft Training Center.

After World War II the facilities, renamed Naval Station Long Beach, were used to support U.S. Navy personnel whose ships were either homeported in Long Beach or in drydock for repairs at the adjacent Long Beach Naval Shipyard. In 1991 the Naval Station was listed for closure as part of the national Base Re-Use and Closure activities as the Department of Defense downsized with the end of the Cold War. In 1994 the Base officially closed, although a number of buildings are still in use.

PART II: ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement

1. **Architectural character:** The International Style gymnasium, facing east, is the dominant building within the Recreation Complex, anchoring

the western end of a formal axis as the administration building 1 anchors the eastern end. The east window wall, rising 37'9", dominates the otherwise plain gymnasium.

2. **Condition:** The condition of the gymnasium is good.

B. Description of Exterior

1. **Overall Dimensions:** Building 23 is rectangular in shape and measures 126' in width by 190'2" in length, and 37'9" in height. It is connected to Building 22 on the north and to the arcade on the east. It consists of a large cube housing the gymnasium, with 15' wide service ells running the length of the north and south walls.

2. **Foundation:** The gymnasium rests on reinforced concrete piles.

3. **Walls:** The walls of Building 23 are of reinforced concrete, 8" thick, with a 4' x 8' plywood form-board finish with a slight ochre wash. Supergraphics are painted on the north, south, and east walls.

4. **Structural system, framing:** Building 23 uses a reinforced concrete post and beam construction.

5. **Porches:** There are six concrete porch landings, two each on the north, south, and west sides. Four shallow steps of tinted rough textured concrete with pipe stairway railings lead to the landing of each of the six porches.

6. **Chimneys:** None

7. **Openings:**

   a. **Doorways and doors:** Building 23 has 11 exterior doors. The north, south, and west sides each have two sets of modern aluminum-frame double doors, with single glass panels and sidelights, set into projecting concrete frames. Original metal lamps flank these entrances; they consist of metal back plates with ribbed cylindrical glass inserts. Five aluminum-frame double doors with single glass panels provide entry to the east side foyer. All the doors have a reflective mylar surface added to them.

   b. **Windows:** Building 23 has 14 windows and one window wall. The north and south sides of the gymnasium main block each have seven steel sash multi-paned windows. The south side windows are covered with a protective wire mesh. There are large metal louver windows on the northeast and southeast corners. A large central window bay extending the height of the

building and broken into thirds by concrete piers provides the dominant feature of the east side. A row of top-hinged transom windows in the upper third of the window wall provides ventilation. The west side has no windows.

8. **Roof:**

a. **Shape, covering:** The flat roof, of reinforced concrete slabs on steel trusses, is covered with rolled composition roofing.

b. **Cornice, eaves:** The north and south ells have 4-foot-wide overhanging concrete eaves.

C. **Description of Interior**

1. **Floor plans:** The total square footage of Building 23 is 12,961. There are 22 rooms. On the first floor are the original 2,000-seat auditorium/gymnasium with three regulation-size courts. In the north ell are an office, two vestibules, equipment and check-out rooms, and laundry. In the south ell are two vestibules, and chair storage and apparatus rooms. In the central foyer is an aerobics studio, with storage in the north section of the foyer and a women's weight room, toilet and locker rooms in the south section of the foyer. In the mezzanine are two fan rooms, a military affiliate radio station (MARS) room in the former projection room, a dance studio, and an office.

2. **Stairways:** The stairway to the mezzanine is concrete, with pipe railings.

3. **Flooring:** The building has asphalt tile floors in the offices and wall-to-wall carpeting in the vestibules and the check out rooms. The original terrazzo floor in the foyer has been carpeted. The gymnasium has new wood floor.

4. **Wall and ceiling finish:** The walls are covered with smooth plaster painted cream color or light blue. The foyer walls have been texturized. The gymnasium has smooth plaster walls, with a cork-textured finish on the upper section of the walls and the ceiling.

5. **Openings:** There are 28 interior doors. The gymnasium has eight double and two single varnished wood doors leading to the entrance lobby and to the service ells. Nine double metal doors provide access from the vestibules in the ells to the equipment check-out and storage areas. Four single metal doors provide access to the storage areas on the first floor. Five single metal doors on the mezzanine provide access to the fan rooms, MARS shortwave radio area, and the former ballet studio.

6. **Decorative features and trim:** An original ticket window is on the wall in the north foyer. Both north and south foyers have 8' high Philippine mahogany wood paneling.

7. **Hardware:** Some original brass doorknobs on the wood doors remain, others have been replaced with modern metal knobs.

8. **Mechanical equipment:**

   a. **Heating, air conditioning, ventilation:** The building was heated with steam heat from the central boiler in Building 4. It is now heated with its own boiler. Two large fans (located in the two fan rooms), one for primary use and the second for back-up, ventilate the gymnasium. At the mezzanine level, large galvanized metal louvers on the northeast and southeast sides vent the fans to the outside.

   b. **Lighting:** All original lighting has been replaced with fluorescent tube lighting.

   c. **Plumbing:** There are 3 bathrooms. It is not known if the plumbing fixtures are original.

9. **Furnishings:** None of the original furnishings remain.

D. Site

1. **General setting and orientation:** Building 23, facing east, is set within a rectangular street grid laid out at the time of construction. It lies on an east-west axis with a long view to Building 1.

2. **Historic landscape design:** The ends of the U-shaped arcade attach to the one story ells on the north and south sides of the gymnasium, forming a central entrance patio. This concrete patio is flanked by grass, palm trees, six per side, and planter boxes, three per side. These planters originally were the bases for indirect torchière lighting. The lights have been replaced with bird-of-paradise plants. Twelve modern pole lights illuminate the area. Raised rectangular concrete planters are attached to the north and south ells on the east side.

PART III: SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Architectural Drawings

There are 35 drawings, dating from 1956-1961, for Building 23 located at Building 300, Long Beach Naval Shipyard archives. The relevant drawings for this documentation are:

#18314: Recreation Building
#18317: Window Guards
#24649: Gymnasium, First Floor Plan
#24650: Gymnasium, Second Floor Plan
#24729: Repairs & Alteration, Showers Floor Plan
#24730: Repairs & Alteration, Showers Wall Elevation
#18316: Parking Area
#18318: Install Ham Antenna
#18319: Install Ham Antenna
#18180: Floor Plan, Auditorium
#18183: Outside Floodlights
#29485: Gymnasium Lighting Plan

A microfilm copy of Elevations (architectural drawing number 1248-340-219), is located at Building 20, Naval Facilities Engineering Command, Construction Battalion Center, Port Hueneme, California.

B. Bibliography

Archiplan Urban Design Collaborative. 1987. *Terminal Island Long Beach Naval Complex, Long Beach, California: Update of Engineering Evaluation for Naval Station: Long Beach, California.* Revised April 1988, Naval Facilities Engineering Command, Long Beach Naval Station. Contract N624-86-C-5263.

Manley, William, Carson Anderson, and Susan M. Hector. 1994. *Historical and Architectural Assessment — Naval Station Long Beach, Long Beach, California.* San Diego, California. Contract Number N68711-92-M-4893.

Property Record Card: NAV. S. and A. Form 277

"Roosevelt Naval Base, Terminal Island: Headquarters of The Naval Operating Base, Terminal Island, Long Beach Harbor." 1944. *Architectural Record* May: 58-70.

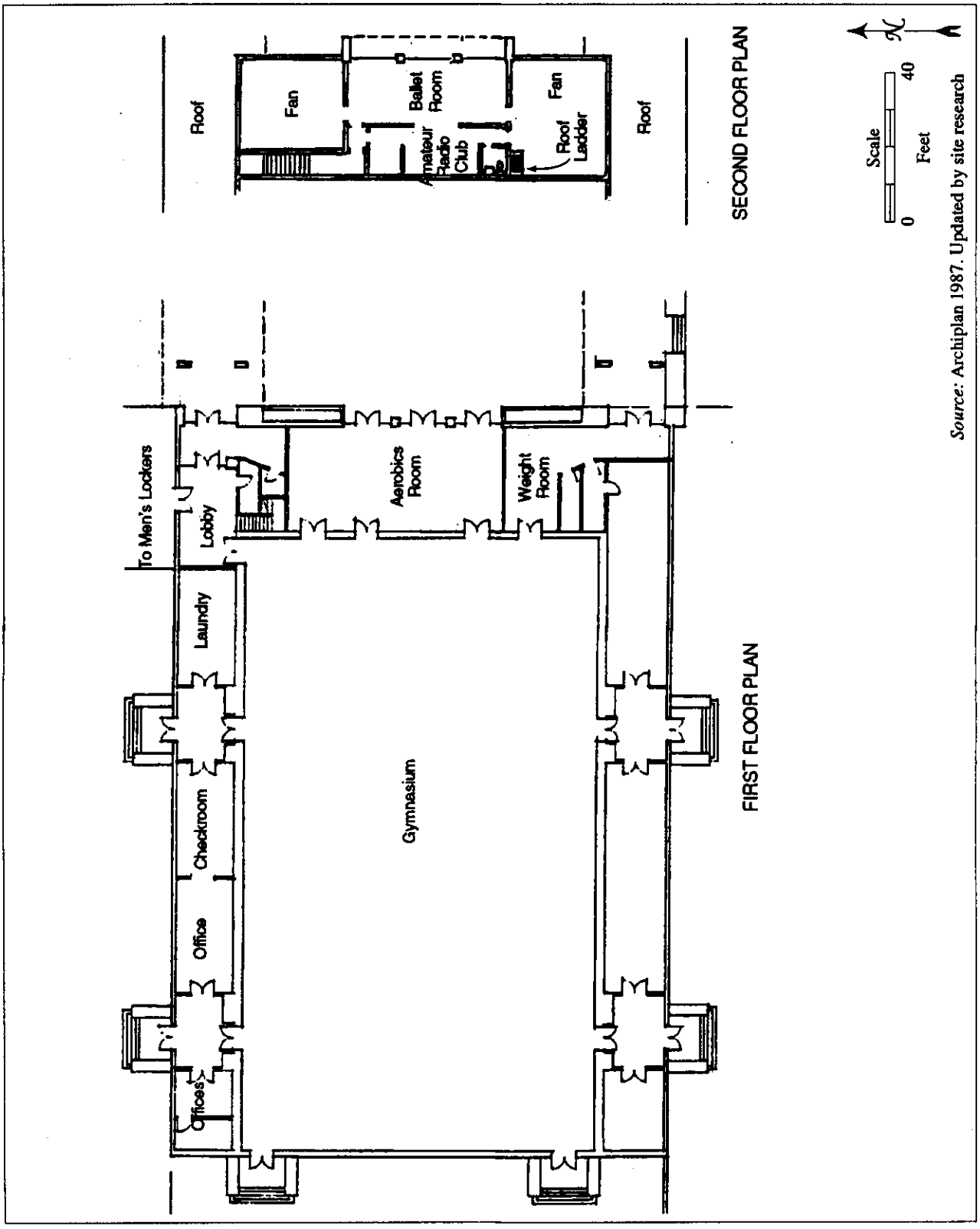
Todd Erickson. Interview with Alexandra C. Cole, 29 March 1996, Naval Station Long Beach, Long Beach, California.

PART IV: PROJECT INFORMATION

This HABS documentation project was undertaken as a mitigative recording required by the Memorandum of Agreement, dated ____ , 1996, signed by the City of Long Beach, the California State Preservation Officer and the Navy. The Navy proposes to transfer the Naval Station property to the City of Long Beach. The City, through the Port of

Long Beach, plans to demolish all the buildings and structures on Roosevelt Base for a container terminal.

The documentation was prepared by Alexandra C. Cole, SAIC, Santa Barbara, architectural historian and Fermina B. Murray, historian, in May 1996. Large-format photography was done by William B. Dewey of Santa Barbara, California, in April 1996.



LAYOUT OF BUILDING 23. 1996